Early in 1916 the Departments concerned with sea transport found themselves in a difficulty owing to the growing shortage of tonnage available to meet growing demands.

The Shipping Committee

On 5th January, 1916, the Cabinet set up the Shipping Control Committee, under the Chairmanship of Lord Curzon. This was the first body entrusted with the task of surveying the tonnage situation as a whole. Its main activities were directed to :—

Securing economy in the use of tonnage on naval and military service ;

Setting a limit to the amount of tonnage supplied to the Allies, whose demands had hitherto been granted as a matter of course ;

Import restrictions ;

Port congestion ;

Shipbuilding.

Restriction

No effective—certainly no adequate—action was taken for over ten months after the appointment of the Committee to achieve any of these aims.

On 10th February, 1916, this Committee presented to Mr. Runciman, the President of the Board of Trade, a Report which showed that whereas the total demands on shipping not as Yet requisitioned for war service would require 10,328,000 gross tons of shipping to carry out, the actual tonnage of shipping available for the purpose was only 7,068,803 tons—a deficit of over 3^ million tons. This was after making allowance for the possible services of foreign shipping which we might be able to obtain. The

Committee accordingly stated that ce the situation is